



United Arab Emirates

Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - [2002](#)

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The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a federation of seven emirates established in 1971. None has any democratically elected institutions or political parties. Traditional rule in the emirates generally has been patriarchal, with political allegiance defined in terms of loyalty to the tribal leaders. There are no general elections, but citizens may express their concerns directly to their leaders through traditional mechanisms, such as the open majlis, or council. In accordance with the 1971 Constitution, the seven emirate rulers constitute a Federal Supreme Council, the highest legislative and executive body. The Council selects a President and Vice President from its membership; the President in turn appoints the Prime Minister and Cabinet. In December 2001, the Council reelected Shaikh Zayed bin Sultan al-Nahyan as head of the state for 5 years. The Constitution requires the Council to meet annually, although individual leaders met frequently in more traditional settings. The Cabinet manages the Federation on a day-to-day basis. A consultative body, the Federal National Council (FNC), consisting of 40 advisors appointed for 2-year terms by the emirate rulers, reviews proposed legislation, discusses the annual budget, and may question federal government ministers in open sessions. Each emirate retains control over its own oil and mineral wealth, some aspects of internal security, and some regulation of internal and external commerce. The federal Government asserts primacy in matters of foreign and defense policy, some aspects of internal security, and increasingly in matters of law and the supply of some government services. The judiciary generally was independent, but its decisions were subject to review by the political leadership.

Each emirate maintained its own independent police force. While all emirate internal security organs theoretically were branches of one federal organization, in practice they operate with considerable independence. There were no reports that security forces committed human rights abuses.

The country has a free market economy based on oil and gas production, trade, and light manufacturing. The local government in each emirate owns the petroleum production enterprise in that emirate. Most of the country's petroleum resources were located in Abu Dhabi, the largest emirate by area. The Emirate of Dubai was likewise an oil producer, as well as a growing financial, commercial, and tourism center in the region. The remaining five emirates had negligible resources and therefore depended in varying degrees on federal government subsidies. The economy provided citizens with a high per capita income, but it was heavily dependent on foreign skilled and unskilled workers. The expatriate population amounted to more than 80 percent of the estimated 3.9 million population in the country.

The Government generally respected its citizens' rights in some areas; however, its record was poor in other areas. Citizens did not have the right to change their government. The Government restricted the freedoms of speech and of the press. The press continued to avoid direct criticism of the Government and exercised self-censorship. The Government restricted the freedoms of assembly and association, and imposed some restrictions on freedom of religion. The Government restricted the rights of workers, some of whom were not protected by labor laws. There were no labor unions. There were reports of poor working conditions, failure to pay wages, and abuse of foreign domestic servants in an economy in which 98 percent of the private sector workforce was foreign. The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs intensified the inspection of establishments to ensure compliance with the labor laws and ferret out violators. Trafficking in women and children continued to be a problem. Beginning September 1, the Government implemented and enforced a ban against the use of juvenile camel jockeys, a number of whom were trafficked to the country from South Asia.

RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Section 1 Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom From:

a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life

There were no reports of arbitrary or unlawful deprivation of life committed by the Government or its agents during the year. There were no developments in the case of Libyan national Abdullah Abu al Ghazali, who died while in security force custody in September 2001. According to Amnesty International (AI), al-Ghazali's wife was informed that her husband had committed suicide while in detention. At year's end, there was no new information on the investigation of this case.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The Constitution prohibits torture, and there were no reports that government officials employed it.

Shari'a (Islamic law) courts (except in Dubai) frequently imposed flogging on Muslims found guilty of adultery, prostitution, and drug or alcohol abuse. In practice flogging was administered in accordance with Shari'a to prevent major or permanent injuries. Convictions in the Shari'a courts did not necessarily require the imposition of Shari'a penalties on non-Muslims, but such sentences were carried out in a few cases. According to AI, in 2001, at least 18 flogging sentences were passed in cases of adultery.

Prison conditions reportedly were mixed, depending on the location. Dubai and Abu Dhabi prison conditions generally met international standards; however, rural prison conditions at times were inadequate. Men and women were housed separately. Pretrial detainees were kept separately from convicted criminals until the trial begins. Juveniles were housed separately from adults.

There was no independent monitoring of prison conditions. There was no information that the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) requested or was denied access to prisons for independent monitoring.

d. Arbitrary Arrest, Detention, or Exile

The Constitution prohibits arbitrary arrest, search, detention, or imprisonment. The law permits incommunicado detention; in the past, the Government generally used it in allegedly sensitive criminal cases in which the police claimed that communication between the accused and a third party could jeopardize their investigation. In such cases, no one was notified that the person had been arrested and was being held, which could amount to forced disappearance.

The law prohibits arrest or search without probable cause.

Under the Criminal Procedures Code, the police must report arrests within 48 hours to the Public Prosecutor, who must determine within the next 24 hours whether to charge, release, or order further detention pending an investigation. The Public Prosecutor may order that detainees be held for 7 days with the discretion to extend detention for another 14 days. For additional detention without charge in cases of felonies or misdemeanors punishable by imprisonment, the authorities must obtain a court order. A court-ordered extension may not exceed an additional 30 days of detention without charge and is granted only upon a showing by the authorities of sufficient evidence that the defendant committed the offense.

The country was a signatory to the Vienna Convention. However, at times some foreign diplomats complained that the authorities did not notify them when their citizens were detained or arrested, and that they only discovered the detention or arrest by word of mouth, by periodic prison visits, or because of an inquiry from the citizen's family as to the citizen's whereabouts.

In concert with other governments, there were arrests and detention in 2001 of numerous individuals suspected of ties to extremist groups. Most of them were released.

The Federal Constitution provides accused persons the right to a speedy trial. This right most often is invoked in civil cases, with civil defendants at times demanding same-day disposition of the cases filed against them. Authorities generally brought criminal defendants to trial in a reasonable time, with the exception of drug-related cases. In drug-related cases, the authorities were required to inform the office of the ruler for the emirate in which the offense was committed of the charges.

Trials could last a substantial period of time, depending on the seriousness of the charges, number of witnesses, and availability of judges. Rape cases sometimes took more than 1 year to get to trial. There was no formal system of bail, but the authorities temporarily could release detainees who deposited money, an important document such as a passport, or an unsecured personal guarantee statement signed by a third party. Those arrested on regular charges were generally allowed to telephone third parties while in detention.

Defendants in cases involving loss of life, including involuntary manslaughter, could be denied release in accordance with the law. However, bail usually was permitted after a payment of compensation, which was a form of financial penalty imposed on

defendants in criminal cases involving a killing.

Review of criminal cases by the local ruler's diwan and bureaucratic delays in processing prisoners or releasing them at times could result in detainees serving additional, unnecessary time in the central prisons.

The rulers of the various emirates regularly pardoned prisoners on religious and national holidays. Those pardoned generally were serving sentences from 3 to 5 years for financial crimes, immigration violations, and other minor offenses; pardons reportedly were not extended to prisoners convicted of murder, rape, and kidnapping. Most of the pardoned foreign nationals were to be deported, while those jailed for financial crimes were to be given a grace period to settle amounts still owed.

The Constitution prohibits forced exile, and it was not practiced.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The Constitution provides for the independence of the judiciary; however, its decisions were subject to review by the political leadership.

Most judges were noncitizen Arabs, whose mandate was subject to periodic renewal by the Government. The percentage of citizens serving as public prosecutors and judges, particularly at the federal level, continued to grow.

There is a dual system of Shari'a (Islamic) courts for criminal and family law matters and secular courts for civil law matters. The civil courts generally were part of the federal system, except in the Dubai and Ras Al-Khaimah Emirates, and were answerable to the Federal Supreme Court located in Abu Dhabi, which had the power of judicial review as well as original jurisdiction in disputes between emirates or between the federal Government and individual emirates. The Emirates of Dubai and Ras Al-Khaimah had their own local and appellate courts, which had jurisdiction over matters within their territory that the Constitution or federal legislation did not specifically reserve to the federal system. The Emirates of Dubai and Ras Al-Khaimah did not refer cases in their courts to the Federal Supreme Court located in Abu Dhabi for judicial review, although they maintained a liaison with the federal Ministry of Justice, Islamic Affairs, and Awqaf.

Each emirate administered Shari'a courts. In some emirates, in addition to family matters, these courts considered all types of civil and commercial cases as well as serious criminal cases. They acted in accordance with traditional Islamic law and practice, but also were required to answer to the Federal Supreme Court. Dubai had a special Shi'a council to act on matters pertaining to Shi'a family law (see Section 5).

Legal counsel may represent defendants in both court systems. Under the Criminal Procedures Code, the accused has a right to government-provided counsel in all cases involving a capital crime or possible life imprisonment regardless of whether the defendant is financially able to hire counsel. The Government provides counsel to indigent defendants charged with felonies punishable by "provisional imprisonment" or imprisonment of 3-15 years.

The right to legal counsel was interpreted to provide that the accused was entitled to an attorney only after the police had completed their investigation. Thus, police could question accused persons sometimes for days or weeks, as in narcotics cases, without benefit of legal counsel.

Defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty. There were no jury trials. The number of judges sitting for a case depended on the type of crime alleged. Generally three judges sat for felony criminal cases and one judge sat in all other cases. All trials were public, except for national security cases and those deemed by the judge likely to harm public morality.

Each court system has an appeals process. Death sentences may be appealed to the ruler of the emirate in which the offense was committed or to the President of the Federation. Non-Muslims who are tried for criminal offenses in Shari'a courts could receive civil penalties at the discretion of the judge. Shari'a penalties imposed on non-Muslims could be overturned or modified by a higher court.

In cases in which a defendant is acquitted of a crime, the prosecutor may appeal the acquittal to a higher court. If the case is appealed, the higher court reviews the case and may receive more and new evidence. If convinced of the defendant's guilt, the appellate court may set aside the lower court's verdict of not guilty and enter a verdict of guilty with an order that the defendant pay compensation. The appellate standard for overturning an acquittal is reportedly "without the slightest doubt of guilt."

In cases in which a defendant is sentenced to death, the sentence may be reduced to a term of imprisonment if the victim or victim's family provides a statement to the court forgiving the defendant. This waiver by the victim or victim's family was sometimes made in exchange for "diya," a financial payment from the defendant. The term of imprisonment in criminal cases was not related to the defendant's payment of compensation to the victim or victim's family.

The local rulers' diwans, following traditional prerogatives, maintained the practice of reviewing many types of criminal and civil offenses before cases were referred to the prosecutor's office. However, this practice was not as prevalent during the year, and such cases usually were referred directly to the prosecutor's office. The diwans may review sentences passed by judges and

reserve the right to return cases to the courts on appeal. The diwans' involvement, which typically occurred when the case involved parties from two different emirates or a citizen and a noncitizen, could lead to long delays prior to and following the judicial process, causing some prisoners to remain in prison after they had completed their sentences. Unlike in the past, there were no reports of intervention by other emirates' rulers in specific cases of personal interest.

The military has its own court system based on western military judicial practice. Military tribunals try only military personnel. There was no separate national security court system. Convicted criminals may request a pardon at any time, except if convicted of serious offenses such as murder.

There were no reports of political prisoners.

f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The Constitution prohibits entry into homes without the owner's permission, except in accordance with the law. Only police officers and public prosecutors carrying a warrant were permitted entry into homes. If the authorities entered a home without a warrant, their actions were considered illegal, and the evidence obtained thereby was suppressible. Officers' actions in searching premises were subject to review, and officers were subject to disciplinary action if they acted irresponsibly. Local custom and practice place a high value on privacy, and entry into private homes without the owner's permission was rare. A female police officer was required to be present during the search of a private home when male family members were absent. There was no known surveillance of private correspondence, although there have been cases of incoming international mail being censored.

Family matters for Muslims are governed by Shari'a law and the local Shari'a courts. As such, Muslim women are forbidden to marry non-Muslims. However, in addition to marrying Muslim women, Muslim men are free to marry women "of the book," that is Christian or Jewish women.

Section 2 Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The Constitution provides for freedom of speech; however, the Government restricted this right in practice. Freedom of the press was restricted.

The law specifically prohibits criticism of the Government, ruling families, and friendly governments that threaten social stability under penalty of imprisonment. However, the law was rarely enforced because journalists practiced self-censorship, and there were no such cases reported during the year.

The country's three English-language newspapers were privately owned, as were three of its six Arabic-language newspapers; however, all privately owned newspapers received government subsidies. Newspapers often relied on news agencies for reporting and news. The government-owned Emirates News Agency regularly provided all newspapers with themes for editorials and with articles regarding domestic and international issues, which then usually were printed verbatim.

By law the Ministry of Information must license all publications. The Ministry also approves the appointment of editors. The law governs content and contains a list of proscribed subjects. Government officials reportedly warned journalists when they published material deemed politically or culturally sensitive.

Journalists engaged in critical investigative reporting on government policy, the ruling families, national security, religion, and relations with neighboring states only if given at least implied permission to report on such matters. During the year, there were no such articles that received widespread attention.

In September 2000, the Government banned 10 prominent citizens, including 4 university professors, from publishing opinion pieces in the country's Arabic and English language press and from giving local television interviews. In April 2001, in response to inquiries by the FNC, the Minister of Information stated that no written ban existed. Reports indicated, however, that a "de facto" ban promoted by the Government continued to exist, prohibiting those banned from writing articles or granting interviews, despite remarks by government officials to the contrary.

Emirates Media, which published Al-Ittihad newspaper and owned Abu Dhabi's radio and television stations, forbade all its employees, including journalists, from speaking with representatives of foreign diplomatic missions without prior approval, although the rule was not enforced in practice.

A press club in Dubai provided facilities for the international press, including access to information, and served as a site for discussions between political figures and journalists. While self-censorship conditions what was reported, foreign journalists and news organizations, including Reuters and CNN operating out of Dubai Media City, part of the Dubai Technology, Electronic Commerce and Media Zone (TECOM), reported that they experienced little to few or no restrictions on the content of print and broadcast material produced for use outside the country.

In January the Dubai Press Club invited 18 international press clubs to form the International Association of Press Clubs, of which Dubai would be the permanent secretariat.

All television and radio stations were government-owned and conformed to government reporting guidelines; however, these unpublished guidelines were not always applied consistently. Satellite receiving dishes were widespread and provided access to international broadcasts without apparent censorship. The main pan-Arab dailies were not censored and were distributed on the same day of publication. Censors at the Ministry of Information and Culture reviewed imported newspapers, magazines, periodicals, books, films, and videos; they banned or censored before distribution any material considered pornographic, violent, derogatory to Islam, supportive of certain Israeli government positions, unduly critical of friendly countries, or critical of the Government or the ruling families.

According to a press report, local access to the Internet, which was open to public use with an estimated 1 million users, was through a state-owned monopoly. However, the public was reportedly increasingly in favor of ending this monopoly and opening the market to more companies. A proxy server blocked material regarded as pornographic or as promoting radical Islamic ideologies and antigovernment sites. In most cases, the proxy server did not appear to block news services, political expression unrelated to radical Islam, or material originating from specific countries. The Internet monopoly solicited suggestions from users regarding "objectionable" sites, and at times the Government responded by briefly blocking some politically oriented sites, which were, after an apparent review, later unblocked. The monopoly also blocked commercial "voice-chat" sites on the Internet.

The ban on criticism of the Government also restricts academic freedom. Academic materials destined for schools in the country were subject to censorship. For example, male and female students were banned from reading texts in which the human body was pictured or sexuality was featured (see Section 5). In February the Ministry of Education and Youth listed 26 books prohibited in schools (although such books were widely available in bookstores), and obligated private schools to comply with the Ministry of Education and Youth's censorship rules regarding curricula and textbooks.

There were no specific cases reported regarding restrictions on academic freedom.

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The Government restricted freedom of peaceful assembly. Organized public gatherings required a government permit, which rarely was granted. In practice, however, the Government rarely interfered with informal gatherings held without a government permit in public places unless complaints were made.

There were a number of organized gatherings of workers before the Ministry of Labor & Social Affairs complaining of unpaid wages. There also were a number of peaceful marches and rallies conducted in support of the Palestinian cause.

Each emirate determined its own practice on public gatherings.

Citizens normally confined their political discussions to the numerous gatherings or majlis, which were held in private homes. There were a multitude of associations organized for economic, religious, labor, social, cultural, sports, and other purposes.

The Government does not permit freedom of association without prior permission; however most types of associations were allowed without prior permission.

Unauthorized political organizations are prohibited. There were no political parties, independent human rights groups, or trade unions (see Sections 3, 4, and 6.a.).

All nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) must be registered with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs; however, a number of unregistered local NGOs operated in the country. NGOs in the country focused on a multitude of issues, including women's issues, the environment, natural history and archaeology. The Jurists Association's Human Rights Committee focused on local and regional human rights issues. The percentage of citizen membership in NGOs varied widely. Also, all private associations, including children's clubs, charitable groups, and hobby associations, must be approved and licensed by local authorities, although this requirement was enforced loosely in some emirates. NGOs registered or licensed with the Government reportedly received funds or subsidies from the Government according to the size of their membership.

Private associations must follow the Government's censorship guidelines if they publish any material.

c. Freedom of Religion

The Federal Constitution designates Islam as the official religion, and Islam is also the official religion of all seven of the individual emirates of the federal union. The Federal Constitution provides for the freedom to exercise religious worship in accordance with established customs, provided that it does not conflict with public policy or violate public morals. The Government generally respected this right in practice; however, the Government controlled virtually all Sunni mosques and prohibited proselytizing by non-Muslims.

Virtually all Sunni mosques were government funded or subsidized; about 5 percent of Sunni mosques were entirely private, and several large mosques had large private endowments. The federal Ministries of Justice and Islamic Affairs and Awqaf distributed weekly guidance to both Sunni imams and Shi'a shaikhs regarding subject matter, themes, and content of religious sermons, and ensured that clergy did not deviate frequently or significantly from approved topics in their sermons. All Sunni imams were employees of either the Federal Ministry of Justice, Islamic Affairs and Awqaf, or individual emirate departments. The Emirate of Dubai's Department of Islamic Affairs and Endowments controlled the appointment of preachers in that Emirate's private mosques, as well as the conduct of their work.

The Shi'a minority, which was concentrated in the northern emirates, was free to worship and maintain its own mosques. All Shi'a mosques were considered private and receive no funds from the Government. The Government did not appoint shaikhs for Shi'a mosques. Shi'a Muslims in Dubai could pursue Shi'a family law cases through a special Shi'a council rather than the Shari'a courts.

Considerable local autonomy in religious matters resided in the individual emirates. There did not appear to be a formalized method of granting official status to religious groups. Rather, the ruling families could grant access to land and permission to build a church thereon. Since not all religious groups had land use grants with churches built there, several unrelated Christian congregations were required to share common facilities. Even so, because Islam considers Christianity one of the three monotheistic religions, facilities for Christian congregations were far greater in number and size than those for non-Christian and non-Muslim groups, despite the fact that Christians represented less than a quarter of non-Muslim foreigners.

Some non-Muslims were permitted to practice their religion freely in religious compounds built on land grants from the local rulers. In such cases, a religious group leader requested from the local ruler a grant of land (title to which remained with the ruler) with permission to build a house of worship there. Religious groups without land grants and churches built on it were limited in their ability to assemble for worship and to conduct business, but were allowed to worship on the compounds of other religious groups if permitted by such religious groups to do so. Discreet, off-compound private and public gatherings were not targeted or disrupted by the police or other security forces.

The Government followed a policy of tolerance towards non-Muslim religions and in practice, interfered very little in the religious activities of non-Muslims. Apparent differences in the treatment of Muslim and non-Muslim groups often had their origin in the dichotomy between citizens and noncitizens rather than religious difference.

The conversion of Muslims to other religions was regarded with extreme antipathy. Therefore, although non-Muslims in the country were free to practice their religion, they were not allowed to proselytize publicly or distribute religious literature under penalty of criminal prosecution and imprisonment. While there was no law against missionary activities, in the past, authorities threatened to revoke the residence permits of persons suspected of such activities; however, no such permits were revoked during the year. Although the Government did not permit foreign missionaries to proselytize, they have performed nontraditional humanitarian missionary work since before the country's independence in 1971. An International Bible Society representative in Al-Ain distributed bibles and other religious material to Christian religious groups countrywide. Authorities did not deny permission to Christians who attempted to distribute religious material to remain in the country.

On November 12, two members of the CID arrested a Filipino pastor for distributing religious materials at a public shopping mall in violation of the prohibition against proselytizing. He was detained until December 17 before being released on informal bail and provided his passport to the authorities as security for his release. He was not charged formally by year's end; however, his movements in the country have not been restricted, and he reportedly has preached to various evangelical congregations throughout the country since his release.

In March 2001, Dubai police arrested four visiting noncitizens for violating laws barring non-Muslims from proselytizing because they distributed Christian religious materials, including videos and CD-ROMS, on a public street. One of those arrested was detained for less than a week. The accused persons deposited their passports as security to guarantee their appearance in court. They were able to move freely about Dubai but not permitted to leave the city. The charges against the noncitizens were dropped in April 2001 and they left the country the following day.

Although immigration authorities routinely asked foreigners to declare their religious affiliation, the Government did not collect or analyze this information, and religious affiliation was not a factor in the issuance or renewal of visas or residence permits. In 2001 Abu Dhabi inquired about religious affiliation in its first municipality-wide census as part of a demographic analysis.

For a more detailed discussion see the 2002 International Religious Freedom Report.

d. Freedom of Movement Within the Country, Foreign Travel, Emigration, and Repatriation

The law provides for freedom of movement or relocation within the country. Except for security areas such as defense and oil installations, the Government generally respected these rights in practice.

Unrestricted foreign travel and emigration are permitted to male citizens, except those involved in legal disputes under adjudication. Custom dictated that a husband could bar his wife, minor male and female children, and adult unmarried

daughters from leaving the country, which he usually accomplished by taking custody of their passports (see Section 5). However, there was no enforcement of this custom at exit points unless there was a court order that barred an individual from traveling. All citizens have the right to return.

There was a small population of "stateless" residents who either were without citizenship or had no proof of citizenship to any country. Many such families have lived in the country for more than one generation. Many stateless residents originally were from Iran and South Asia; other stateless residents included Bedouins or the descendants of Bedouins who were unable to prove that they originated in the country. There was no formal procedure for naturalization, although foreign women received citizenship by marriage to a citizen, and anyone could receive a passport by presidential fiat. Because they were not of the original tribal groups, naturalized citizens could have their passports and citizenship status revoked for criminal or politically provocative actions; however, such revocations were rare, and there were no reports of such occurrences during the year.

A child born to a citizen man and noncitizen woman acquired citizenship at birth. In November the Government announced that children born to citizen women and noncitizen men also acquired citizenship at birth.

Although not sanctioned by law, employers generally required foreign national employees to surrender their passports as a condition of employment. In practice this prevented international travel or repatriation by foreign national employees without their employers' consent and especially affected such employees in the resolution of employment disputes. Employers sometimes petitioned immigration authorities to blacklist employees with whom they were engaged in contract disputes. Citizens were not restricted in seeking or changing employment. However, foreign nationals in specific occupations could not change employers without first leaving the country for 6 months (see Section 6.e.).

The Government has not formulated a formal policy regarding refugees, asylees, or first asylum. In the past, the Government detained persons seeking refugee status, particularly non-Arabs, while they awaited resettlement in a third country.

There were no reports during the year of persons seeking refugee status or first asylum and the issue of first asylum did not arise during the year. The Government cooperated with the office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations in assisting refugees.

During the year, there were no reports of the forced return of persons to a country where they feared persecution.

Section 3 Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change Their Government

Citizens do not have the right to change their government. There are no popular elections or democratic institutions, and citizens do not have the right to form political parties. Federal executive and legislative power is in the hands of the Federal Supreme Council, a body composed of the hereditary rulers of the seven emirates that elects from its members the country's President and Vice-President. Decisions at the federal level generally were made by consensus among the rulers, their families, and other leading families. The seven emirate rulers, their extended families, and those persons and families to whom they were allied by historical ties, marriage, or common interest held political and economic power in their respective emirates.

A federal consultative body, called the Federal National Council (FNC), consists of 40 advisors appointed by the rulers. Advisors are drawn from each emirate, with proportion based on emirate population. The FNC has no legislative authority but it may question ministers and make policy recommendations to the Cabinet. Its sessions usually were open to the public.

The choice of appointing a new emirate ruler falls to the ruling family in consultation with other prominent tribal figures. By tradition, rulers and ruling families were presumed to have the right to rule, but their incumbency ultimately depended on the quality of their leadership and their responsiveness to their subjects' needs. Emirate rulers were accessible, in varying degrees, to citizens who had a problem or a request.

Tradition rather than the law limited the political role of women, and there were very few women in senior positions. There were no female members of the FNC. In Sharjah five women served on the emirate-wide, 40-member Consultative Council. The new female Council members were appointed to the Council's Family Development Committee; however, they reportedly were not limited to working on social issues and could also join the Council's other committees. Other women in senior government positions included an undersecretary in the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and an assistant undersecretary for planning and evaluation in the Ministry of Education.

Although the small Shi'a minority has enjoyed commercial success, few Shi'as held top positions in the Federal Government.

Section 4 Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

The Jurists' Association Human Rights Committee, which focused on human rights education, operated as an independent domestic human rights NGO. The Committee conducted a number of seminars and symposia throughout the year on various human rights issues.

The Government cooperated with international human rights NGOs, other foreign human rights NGOs, and international governmental organizations. There were no reports that the Government refused to cooperate with or refused access to international NGO human rights monitors.

In the summer, AI visited the country and discussed various human rights issues with Government officials. During the year, the Government also cooperated with foreign NGOs and worked with foreign governments on issues involving the practice of trafficking in boys for use as child camel jockeys.

In July representatives from the Armenian office of the International Organization for Migration met with government officials and community members to discuss trafficking in women issues. The Government continued to work with the International Labor Organization on labor issues.

In May the Ministry of the Interior conducted a seminar entitled "Police Profession and Human Rights" and created a Human Rights Department to monitor human rights abuses centrally and to increase awareness on human rights issues.

In July the government-sponsored Zayed Center for Coordination and Follow-Up, an affiliate of the Arab League, hosted a 2-day international conference on human rights and war victims. In December the Dubai Police Human Rights Section hosted a conference on the protection of prisoners' rights and other human rights issues. The Dubai Police Academy continued to include a course on human rights in its curriculum for fourth-year students.

Section 5 Discrimination Based on Race, Sex, Disability, Language, or Social Status

The Constitution provides for equality before the law without regard to race, nationality, or social status. However, there was institutional and cultural discrimination based on sex and nationality.

Women

Abuse and rape are criminal offenses, and offenders were prosecuted and penalized. There were some reported cases of spousal abuse. The laws protect women from verbal abuse or harassment from men, and violators were subject to criminal action. Police units were stationed at major public hospitals so that victims of abuse could file complaints, which would fall under the jurisdiction of the Shari'a courts; in addition, attending physicians could call upon police to interview suspected victims of abuse. Social workers and counselors also maintained offices at public hospitals. However, women sometimes were reluctant to file formal charges for social, cultural, and economic reasons. When abuse was reported to local police, authorities could take action to protect the complainant. There continue to be credible reports of physical and sexual abuse of female domestic servants by some local and foreign employers (see Section 6.e.). In July the Women's Da'waa Administration, part of the Dubai Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Department, established a telephone hotline for women and children. The hotline had direct access to the Dubai Police if police assistance was necessary, and was open to requests for assistance from women in all emirates.

Although "honor killings" were uncommon, in June, in an apparent "honor killing" case, the Shari'a Appeal Court in Ras Al-Khaimah Emirate commuted a foreign national's sentence of death to 5 years served upon the defendant's parents' request that the death penalty be waived. The defendant was convicted of the death of his younger sister by stabbing because she married without her family's approval. The defendant also seriously injured a second sister who tried to intervene.

Prostitution is illegal; however, it has become an increasing problem in recent years, particularly in Dubai. No accurate statistics were available. However, substantial numbers of women arrived from the states of the former Soviet Union, Africa, East Asia, Eastern Europe, and other states of the Middle East for temporary stays during which they engaged in prostitution and possibly other activities connected with organized crime. There was credible evidence that many of these women sought to enter the country to make substantially more money than they could earn in their home countries by engaging in prostitution; however, other reports suggested that some of them engaged in involuntary prostitution because their salaries were not paid or they were reduced (see Section 6.f.).

While prostitution was acknowledged widely to exist, the Government did not address the issue publicly because of societal sensitivities. In an effort to combat prostitution, the Dubai police conducted special patrols in areas frequented by prostitutes, and the immigration and police forces have formed special units that conducted raids and sting operations in areas frequented by prostitutes. To address the problem, authorities restricted the number of visas issued to single women between the ages of 30 and 40. However, press reports indicated that airlines and tourism companies continued to obtain visitor visas for single women between the ages of 30 and 40.

Trafficking in women for the purposes of sexual exploitation was a problem (see Section 6.f.).

There were no legal prohibitions against women owning property or businesses. The Shari'a law of inheritance applies equally to men and women although laws of distribution may differ. When a woman marries, her separate property (including her dowry, which is set by law at a maximum of approximately \$13,700 or 50,000 dirhams) and the income of her separate property remain under her control and are not commingled with the separate property of her husband. During the marriage, the husband is obliged to provide a marital home and necessities for his wife and children. In the event of divorce, a woman takes her separate

property, any amounts she receives in a property settlement with her husband, plus any allowances granted to her for maintenance for her and the children.

Custom dictated that a husband could bar his wife, minor male and female children, and adult unmarried daughters from leaving the country, if only by taking custody of their passports (see Section 2.d.).

Neither the labor law nor the civil service law, which covers labor matters in the public sector, prohibits the employment of women. A man has no right under Shari'a law to ban his wife from working if she was employed at the time of their marriage. By custom and tradition, some government bodies would not employ a married woman without her husband's written consent, although such permission usually was granted.

Shari'a law is applied in personal status cases. The law permits men to have more than one wife, but not more than four, at a time. A husband is required to ask his wife's permission and approval before he may take a second wife.

Divorce is permissible. A woman may be granted a divorce if she can prove that her husband has inflicted physical or moral harm upon her; for example, that he has deliberately stayed away from her for 3 months, or has not paid for her upkeep or for the maintenance of her children. Divorced women are granted custody of female children until they reach the age of maturity or marry; they are granted temporary custody of male children until they reach the age of 13. If the mother is deemed unfit, custody reverts to the next able female relative on the mother's side. A woman who remarries may forfeit her right to the custody of children from a previous marriage.

The law prohibits cohabitation by unmarried couples. The Government may imprison and deport noncitizen women if they bear children out of wedlock. In the event that a court sentences a woman to prison for such an offense, local authorities, at the request of the prisoner, may hold the newborn children in a special area within the confines of the prison or place them with a relative. In rare cases, children were held in other facilities until the mother's release. In Dubai Emirate, unmarried pregnant women generally must marry the father of the child or repatriate to their home country. Otherwise, both parties would be subject to arrest for fornication.

There were no legal prohibitions against a woman owning her own business. Traditionally, professional women, including doctors, architects, and lawyers, did not face restrictions on licensing businesses in their names. The Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce conducted programs to encourage small business entrepreneurship by women. The Chambers of Commerce and Industry in Abu Dhabi and Dubai Emirates had Businesswomen's Councils.

In October the first Arab and International Businesswomen's Conference was held in Dubai. Attended by about 500 delegates, the conference featured international women entrepreneurs and workshops conducted by professional trainers.

Women who worked outside the home sometimes did not receive equal benefits, such as housing, and faced discrimination in promotion. If a woman and her husband were both employed by the Government, both housing allowances will be paid to the husband because he is obliged under Shari'a law to provide for housing. The Government provided employee housing allowances to single women and to married women whose husbands were employed in the private sector.

Maternity leave for public sector employees is a minimum of 45 days to a maximum of 6 months—2 months with full pay, 2 additional months of nursing leave with half salary, and the possibility of 2 more months without salary.

Opportunities for women have grown in government service, education, private business, and health services. Citizen and noncitizen women constituted 15 percent of the national workforce. The federal Government publicly has encouraged citizen women to join the workforce, ensuring public sector employment for all that apply. Women represent most primary and secondary school teachers and health care workers, and make up almost half of all government workers.

The law prohibits sexual harassment. As a form of deterrence, Dubai-based newspapers regularly published pictures of men arrested in Dubai for harassing women in public places. In August a citizen was convicted and fined in Dubai for breach of privacy because he secretly photographed six girls in a restaurant.

Women continued to make progress in education. They constituted over 75 percent of the student body at UAE University in Al-Ain. Most universities have separate campuses for men and women; however, the American Universities in Dubai and Sharjah, private institutions, were coeducational. Academic materials were subject to censorship, and students were banned from reading texts in which the human body was pictured or sexuality was featured (see Section 2.a.).

Women officially were encouraged to continue their education, and government-sponsored women's centers provided adult education and technical training courses. The federal armed forces accepted female volunteers, who enrolled in a special training course that started after the Gulf War. The Dubai Police College also recruited women; many were deployed at airports, immigration offices, and women's prisons.

In August the first class of policewomen for Sharjah Emirate, consisting of 53 women, completed a police skills training course at the Sharjah Academy for Police Sciences.

Children

The Government expended resources on the welfare of child citizens; however, noncitizen children received fewer benefits.

Children who were citizens received free public education through the university level, free health care, and were assured housing. Citizens employed by the Government also were eligible to receive aid from the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare for sons and daughters who were under the age of 18, unmarried, or had disabilities.

Noncitizen resident children were not permitted to enroll in public school unless they lived in rural areas that lacked private schools. Many foreign workers in private sector employment received education allowances as part of their salary packages; otherwise, expatriates residing in the country paid for the expense of their children's education. In an effort to help offset this expense for public employees, the Government provided an annual subsidy of approximately \$1,600 (6,000 dirhams) to its noncitizen employees for private school tuition per family.

Citizen children were required to attend school—segregated by gender—through the sixth grade, the last grade of primary education, when children could be as young as 10 or 11 years old. However, compulsory education was not enforced, and some children, both girls and boys, did not attend school.

Child abuse was not prevalent, apart from the trafficking of young boys employed as camel jockeys (see Sections 6.c., 6.d., and 6.f.). Effective September 1, the Government banned the use of young boys as jockeys in camel races, with violators subject to penalties up to and including imprisonment. The Government enforced the ban by inspections at races. There were no reports of ban violations by year's end.

Persons with Disabilities

There was no discrimination against persons with disabilities in employment, education, or in the provision of other state services. There was no federal legislation requiring accessibility for persons with disabilities; however, most public buildings provided access to disabled persons. The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs sponsored six government physical and mental rehabilitation centers open only to citizens.

Other rehabilitation centers were semi-government or established by charity associations. Initiatives ranged from monthly social aid funds, special education, and transportation assistance, to sending a team to the Special Olympics. The Government and quasi-government entities also provided a significant amount of nongovernmental financial assistance, services, and emotional support to persons with disabilities.

In September the Ministry of the Interior established in Abu Dhabi Emirate, the Rehabilitation, Training and Recruitment Center for People with Special Needs. The center provided comprehensive education, training and guidance and job placement assistance to disabled persons between 14 and 40 years of age.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

Societal discrimination against noncitizens, while not legally sanctioned, was prevalent and occurred in most areas of daily life, including employment, housing, and social interaction. Employment, immigration, and security policy, as well as cultural attitudes towards the very substantial number of foreign workers, were conditioned by national origin.

It was estimated that more than 50 percent of foreign workers were from the Indian subcontinent. Noncitizens were denied access to some free services provided by the Government, including education, health care, and social and recreational club memberships.

Section 6 Worker Rights

a. The Right of Association

The law does not authorize workers to form or join unions, and in practice, there were none. However, the Government allowed workers to associate freely for the advancement of common goals and interests. In practice workers addressed grievances and negotiated disputes or matters of interest with employers through formal and informal mechanisms.

Since 1995, the country has been suspended from the U.S. Overseas Private Investment Corporation insurance programs because of the Government's lack of compliance with internationally recognized worker rights standards. However, the ILO reported in April that the country, along with other Gulf States, had agreed to start projects to improve respect for freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining.

b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

Although the law does not grant workers the right to engage in collective bargaining, it expressly authorizes collective work dispute resolution.

There were a number of organized gatherings of workers that complained of unpaid wages before the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. Some professional associations were granted greater freedom to raise work-related concerns, to lobby the Government for redress, or to file a grievance with the Government. The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs reviewed employment contracts for workers in the industrial and service sectors to ensure compliance with the labor laws. The labor laws do not cover domestic and agricultural workers. The Ministry of Interior's Naturalization and Residency Administration reviewed the contracts of foreign domestic employees as part of residency permit processing to ensure that the negotiated salaries and terms were adequate. For the resolution of work-related disputes, workers had to rely on conciliation committees organized by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs or on special labor courts.

The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs distributed information to foreign workers outlining their rights under the labor law and how to pursue labor disputes, whether individual or collective. Employees could file individual employment dispute complaints with the Ministry of Labor. With the Ministry acting as mediator, if the complaint was unresolved by agreement of the parties, the employee could file a complaint with the labor courts. In a collective work dispute between employees and employer or employers concerning a subject of joint interest to all or a group of them in an establishment, trade, vocation or in a certain vocational sector, employees or employers could file complaints with the Labor Ministry if they were unable to settle such disputes amicably. If the Labor Ministry was unable to mediate a settlement within 10 days, the complaint was submitted to a Conciliation Committee for settlement. Either the employee or employer could appeal the Conciliation Committee's decision to a Supreme Committee of Conciliation, whose decision is final. While these regulations existed, there was little information available about their implementation in practice.

The Government prohibits strikes by those employed in the public sector on the grounds of national security considerations. However, there were a number of strikes by private sector employees during the year. There were no reports that workers who went on strike were deported.

Labor laws do not cover, and therefore do not protect, government employees, domestic servants, and agricultural workers. The latter two groups faced considerable difficulty in negotiating employment contracts because the mandatory requirements contained in the labor law did not apply. They also faced considerable difficulty in obtaining assistance to resolve disputes with their employers. The employer generally tied an employee's residency or visa to his employment and sponsorship. If the employee terminated his employment and was unable to secure new employment and a new sponsor, the employee lost residency and could be required to leave the country.

Businesses in free trade zones must comply with federal labor laws; however the Ministry of Labor did not regulate them. Instead, each free trade zone maintained its own labor department to address workers concerns.

c. Prohibition of Forced or Bonded Labor

Forced or bonded labor was illegal. However, some employment agents brought foreign workers to the country under conditions approaching indenture. Some women reportedly were brought to the country for service sector employment and later were forced into prostitution (see Section 6.f.). Some low-paid unskilled and semi-skilled workers were victims of contract-switching.

The Government prohibits forced and bonded child labor and generally enforces this prohibition effectively. In particular, it has taken concrete steps to resolve the problems of child camel jockeys (see Section 4, 6.d., and 6.f.).

d. Status of Child Labor Practices and Minimum Age for Employment

The labor law prohibits employment of persons under the age of 15 and has special provisions for employing those 15 to 18 years of age. The Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs is responsible for enforcing the regulations. Other regulations permitted employers to employ only adult foreign workers. The Government did not issue work permits for foreign workers under the age of 18 years. Child labor was not tolerated, with the exception in the past of child camel jockeys (see Section 5, 6.c., and 6.f.).

In September the Government implemented and began enforcing a child camel jockey ban with criminal penalties for violators up to and including imprisonment. The ban prohibits the use of camel jockeys less than 15 years of age and less than 45 kilograms (99 pounds). The Government enforced the ban through inspections at races. There were no cases of ban violations reported by year's end.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

Approximately 98 percent of the private sector workforce consisted of foreigners. There were a considerable number of skilled foreign nationals in the country who were employed under favorable working conditions. However, the country also was a destination for a large number of unskilled workers, including up to 250,000 domestic servants, most of them women from South and East Asia, and an even larger number of unskilled male workers, mostly from South Asia. These unskilled laborers

actively competed for jobs in the country and other Gulf countries, and in the past were subject to poor working conditions.

The standard workday is 8 hours per day; the standard workweek is 6 days per week; however, these standards were not enforced strictly. Certain types of workers, notably domestic servants, could be obliged to work longer than the mandated standard. The law also provides for a minimum of 24 days per year of annual leave (2 days per month if service is more than 6 months but less than 1 year; 30 days per year if service exceeds 1 year) plus 10 national and religious holidays. There was no legislated or administrative minimum wage; rather, supply and demand determined compensation. Compensation depended on occupation and employer and ranged from \$109 (400 dirhams) per month for domestic or agricultural workers working for local individual employers to \$164 (600 dirhams) per month for construction workers working for companies to much higher salaries for highly skilled employees. Compensation packages generally provided housing or housing allowances. In addition, other benefits, such as homeward passage or health cards for minimal to no-cost health care, were often provided to employees by their employers.

The Labor and Social Affairs Ministry reviewed labor contracts and did not approve any contract that stipulated a clearly unacceptable wage.

Most foreign workers did not earn the salary required to obtain residency permits for their families. The required monthly minimum salary to permit accompanying families was \$1,090 (3,924 dirhams) or \$817 (2,941 dirhams), when a housing allowance is provided.

In two recent cases affecting the long held assumption of almost total job security for citizens, a number of citizens were involuntarily transferred, retired, or terminated from government employment reportedly due to their affiliations or opinions. The federal civil service laws, rather than the labor laws, covered public sector employees. According to press reports, 10 national employees of the Ministry of Justice, Islamic Affairs and Awqaf filed complaints in June alleging that adverse employment actions taken against them – involuntary retirement prior to the legal age of retirement – were in alleged violation of the civil service laws and the Social Security Law.

In August some employees of the Ministry of Education and Youth also were affected by adverse employment decisions. Press reports indicated that these national employees were retired involuntarily, whereas others were transferred involuntarily to other federal ministries. The affected employees claimed they had good service records and alleged that the adverse employment actions were taken without stated reasons, cause, notice or process.

There continued to be local newspaper reports regarding the non-payment of wages to foreign workers.

In May 73 laborers gathered to file a complaint against their contracting company employer for 6 months unpaid wages and for failure to renew their residence permits and labor cards. The police station provided a bus to transport the workers to file their complaint. Also in May, more than 20 medical students protested the suspension of their classes by their lecturers because the lecturers had not been paid for 3 months. In August approximately 1,500 workers gathered at their employer's head office to complain of unpaid wages. In September over 100 hotel employees filed a joint complaint against their employers for unpaid wages of 3 to 5 months, annual leave salary, and end-of-leave service benefits. The hotel had recently been sold without prior notice to the employees and without making any legal arrangement to settle the unpaid salaries and benefits. At year's end, there was no new information available on two cases involving the non-payment of wages from 2001: 61 Indian and Bangladeshi laborers and 500 South Asian construction workers.

In May 2001, the Government introduced a new law requiring some employers to deposit monetary guarantees with third-party banks. The purpose of the guarantee was to decrease the growing number of cases in which employees worked, sometimes for months, without wages. The amount of the guarantee increased according to the number of workers employed by the depositor. In theory, the greater the number of workers employed by a company, the more money would be deposited and the greater the likelihood that workers would be paid in a timely manner. However, the law does not protect all workers. The law exempts from this requirement those companies in which the Government owns a share, banks, insurance firms, petroleum firms, and certain hotels.

In May the Labor Ministry announced that the institution of bank guarantees to protect rights of workers had been mostly successful as the number of labor disputes, especially in companies that were required to deposit large bank guarantees, had decreased. After reports that some employers were making their employees pay the amount of the bank guarantee, in September the Labor Ministry warned employers that such actions were in violation of the labor laws since the employers were responsible for providing the bank guarantees and that the Ministry would take strict action against companies that deducted the value of the bank guarantee from their workers' salaries.

In May the Labor Ministry announced it would not tolerate the violation of the rights of workers, especially those of low-income laborers, and increased and intensified inspections. In August the Labor Ministry announced that 215 companies had been blacklisted (suspended from submitting applications for new work permits or sponsorship transfers) and fined for labor law violations. In September the Labor Ministry blacklisted a company for failure to comply with an agreement with the Ministry to pay outstanding backpay of five months to 300 workers.

Labor law violations by private industry reportedly were high due to a shortage of labor inspectors and resources. In June the

Labor Ministry created a special task force to inspect all industrial establishments in the private sector. In November 54 additional labor inspectors began work.

Some foreign nationals involved in disputes with employers, particularly in cases in which the employee signed a contract containing a clause not to complete, could be blacklisted by the employer with immigration authorities, effectively preventing their return for a specified period of time. Employers also had the option to petition to ban from the work force for 6 months any foreign employee who left his job without fulfilling the terms of his contract (see Section 2.d.).

Employers did not always follow the laws regarding the sponsorship of foreign employees. Under the regulations, a company that has one or more employee whose work permit has expired and not been renewed will be barred from employing new staff. However, the rule was enforced unevenly.

The Ministries of Health and of Labor and Social Affairs, municipalities, and civil defense enforced health and safety standards, and the Government required every large industrial concern to employ a certified occupational safety officer. However, health and safety standards were not observed uniformly. Press reports in June 2001 noted a Ministry of Labor study that stated that many industrial establishments failed to observe health and safety regulations, and more than half provided substandard housing and unclean environments, with sometimes as many as 15 workers living in a single room.

In August in Dubai, the steel roof of a four-story power plant building under construction collapsed, killing 9 laborers and injuring 19, 5 of them seriously. In response, Dubai Municipality ordered a team of its Building and Housing Department's specialized construction engineers to visit the site and report on the collapsed structure. The Labor Ministry also investigated the accident with regard to the legal responsibilities of the involved companies to their workers. In May 2001, Dubai increased inspections of construction worksites and factories. This measure followed a series of deaths and injuries caused by accidents at construction sites throughout the country.

Contrary to popular belief, there is no law in the country that prohibits labor outdoors when the temperature exceeds 50 degrees Celsius. The law does require, however, that employers provide employees with a safe work environment. Medical experts in the country reported that it was inadvisable for laborers to work outdoors when the temperature exceeded 40 degrees Celsius.

After five Dubai workers died of sunstroke in July, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs urged companies to provide safety measures to avoid casualties from sunstroke and heat exposure, including reducing work hours or splitting the workday to include a break between 11 a.m. or noon and 3:00 p.m. The Labor Ministry also warned employers that it would strictly enforce regulations requiring employers to ensure safe working conditions for their employees. At year's end, there was no further information.

In July 2 Sharjah hospitals reported receiving 10 cases of sunstroke each day. Abu Dhabi public hospital emergency units reported 340 cases of severe and mild sunstroke, mostly involving outdoor laborers, in the first 3 weeks of August. In the first week of August, 60 workers who suffered from sunstroke were admitted to a Dubai hospital. At year's end, there was no further information.

Workers' jobs were not protected if they removed themselves from what they considered to be unsafe working conditions. However, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs could require employers to reinstate workers who were dismissed for not performing unsafe work. Injured workers were entitled to fair compensation, and all workers had the right to lodge grievances with Ministry officials, who made an effort to investigate all complaints.

Rulings on complaints may be appealed within the Ministry and ultimately to the courts; however, many workers chose not to protest for fear of reprisals or deportation.

There were reports of abuse of domestic workers by their employers. Allegations included excessive work hours, nonpayment of wages, and verbal, physical, and sexual abuse. There was no further information available on cases in 2001 of attempted suicide and rape (see Section 5).

Sponsorship and residency laws do not permit most foreign national employees to change employers, and employers normally held their employees' passports. Because of this practice, servants were unable to leave their employment and return to their home country or find another job.

In the past, employers typically transported workers from their living quarters to their work site in trucks, trailers, or pick-ups. In an effort to improve the safety of workers during the transport, in April 2001, the Dubai Emirate banned transport in or through the emirate of laborers in pick-up trucks and truck trailers that were not designed to transport persons and lacked safety features, and required employers to transport employees in buses, with offenders subject to fines and/or vehicle seizure. In December Abu Dhabi Emirate also banned this practice.

f. Trafficking in Persons

The law does not prohibit specifically trafficking in persons, although child smuggling, prostitution, and pornography are crimes.

Trafficking in women and young boys used as camel jockeys was a problem. The Government investigated allegations of trafficking in persons when such allegations were made and provided assistance in repatriation, medical care and locating shelter for trafficking victims.

In September the Government banned the use of children as camel jockeys in an effort to end this use of child labor and eliminate the trafficking of young boys to the country for this purpose. The Government also tightened controls at points of entry into the country for boys under the age of 15 years and ordered the repatriation of children in the country used as camel jockeys.

The law prohibits the use of camel jockeys that are less than 15 years of age and weigh less than 45 kilograms (99 pounds). All camel jockeys are required to have a government-issued identification card, which were issued after physical examination by a medical committee through the use of x-rays and other tests to confirm that the child was at least 15 years of age.

The Government established the following penalties for violators of the child camel jockey ban: first offense, fine of approximately \$5,500 (20,000 dirhams); second offense, banned from participation in camel races for one year; third and subsequent offenses, imprisonment. The Government enforced the ban by inspections at camel races.

There reportedly were as many as hundreds of underage camel jockeys working in the country who were subjected to harsh conditions.

In the past, credible sources reported that almost all camel jockeys were boys between the ages of 4 and 10 brought to the country by small, organized gangs. The gangs obtained the youths, usually from poor families in Pakistan and Bangladesh, by kidnaping, or in some instances by buying them from their parents or taking them under false pretenses, and then smuggling them into the country. Some children have reported being beaten while working as jockeys, and others have been injured seriously during races.

There was no further action taken in the 2001 death of a 7-year old Bangladeshi boy in Dubai or the kidnaping in 2000 of a 10-year old Pakistani boy camel jockey.

There were credible reports of trafficking in women to the country. Some foreign diplomats and NGOs reported that some women were brought to the country under the false pretense of working in the service sector or as domestic servants, but then were forced into prostitution. When these women and girls arrived in the country, the traffickers did not provide the promised employment, reportedly took their passports, and forced them to work as prostitutes to repay their travel expenses. The women received little payment from the traffickers, however, which made it difficult to repay their debts.

The women also were warned that they could be arrested if they turned to the police or others for help because they were in the country illegally. It was unclear whether this trafficking activity was conducted with the full complicity of the women's citizen sponsors, or whether the women's generally noncitizen agents were exploiting the sponsorship system to engage in illicit activity (see Section 5).

The Kazakhstan Government reported in June 2001 that it broke up a trafficking ring that specialized in sending women to the country for prostitution. Five members of the ring were arrested while attempting to board a woman and a 15-year-old girl on a flight to Dubai.